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A Dangerous Experiment

A Farce in Two Scenes

By

FRANCES SALTONSTALL

Author of "The Butlers," and others plays

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BOSTON

WALTER H. BAKER COMPANY

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A Dangerous Experiment

CHARACTERS

MURRAY WINTHROP, *a senior at Harvard.*
CHARLES HOLLISTER, *Winthrop's room-mate.*
GEORGE FOWLER, *another classmate.*
JAMES THORNTON, *a junior at Harvard, "The Prig."*
GRANGER MILLS, *another junior, "Daisy Dupont."*
HOWARD WELLS, *a freshman.*
MRS. WINTHROP, *Murray's mother.*
CAROLINE WINTHROP, *Murray's sister.*
NANCY MARTIN WEBSTER, *a Radcliffe student.*

TIME.—Present. PLACE.—Cambridge.

SCENE I.—Murray Winthrop's room at Claverly Hall,
10:00 P. M.

SCENE II.—The same as in Scene I; four days later,
4:30 P. M.



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A Dangerous Experiment

SCENE I

SCENE.—MURRAY WINTHROP'S *study in Claverly Hall.*

(As the curtain rises, several men are seated about, having a good time. There are evidences of it everywhere. Cigars and cigarettes, siphon of soda, one or two empty beer glasses, etc., are strewn about on the table. It is late in the evening, ten-thirty or so, and the men are in dispute over something, as is evident by the expression on their faces.)

MURRAY. So you chaps think I won't dare put such an advertisement in the "Saturday Evening Transcript."

GRANGER. I'll bet you fifty dollars you don't.

GEORGE. Better not dare him, Granger; Murray never stopped at anything; besides, it's a fool thing to do anyway.

HOWARD. Nonsense, George, you are as timid as Murray is —

MURRAY. Foolhardy!

(Laughing heartily. He is sitting at a writing desk, busily writing.)

GEORGE. Call it anything you like, I warn you it's a stupid risk to take.

(MURRAY finishes what he is writing and walks over to the table where the other men are.)

MURRAY. How does this sound, boys? "Wanted, a wife. She must be under twenty-one and over eighteen, amiable, attractive, good-looking, with plenty of common

sense and a keen sense of humor. Write, or call at Claverly Hall, Room 16, between four-thirty and six o'clock on Tuesday, January twenty-seventh."

(*Pauses to hear what the others have to say.*)

GRANGER. That's bully, just the thing! To the point, no extra words, couldn't be better.

(*Takes it from MURRAY and reads it to himself again.*)

JAMES (*drawing his long, lean body from the low chair in which he has been reclining*). You ought to stipulate for a fortune, too. (Yawns.)

GEORGE. Girls with money don't have to answer "ads." to get husbands.

HOWARD. Some I know wouldn't get one even then.

GEORGE. Isn't Claverly Hall rather a public place for a girl to come to all alone? No decent young woman would do such a thing.

(*All laugh at his limited sense of humor.*)

MURRAY. That's why my bet is so safe. You're an awful kill-joy, Fowler. Can't you let a fellow have some fun? I tell you the thing is impossible; I'm bound to win my bet. I hate to think of Granger's losing that fifty dollars; it's like taking food from a hungry child.

(*Laughs to himself.*)

GRANGER (*good-naturedly*). Don't worry about my losing the fifty dollars. I'm quite willing to stick to my side of the bargain.

HOWARD (*lighting another cigarette*). What's money to Granger, anyway?

GEORGE. It's lucky Murray can afford to lose, too.

JAMES. Don't be so serious; it's only a lark, whoever wins. (*Goes over and stands in front of the fireplace.*)

MURRAY. Of course it is. Why, good Lord, I'd give fifty dollars to win a good laugh at old Granger's expense.

GRANGER. You may find I'll have the money and the laugh too. (*Walking up and down the room.*)

MURRAY. Whichever way it turns out, the bargain is sealed. (*Holds out his hand to GRANGER, who takes it.*) Now I must run out and mail this note at the corner post box. (*Starts and then stops.*) Mind you fellows are out of here before I come back. I've got to study; the mid-years are coming and if I don't work hard, I'll flunk every one of them.

(*Takes his hat and disappears out of the door, whistling as he goes.*)

GEORGE. I believe Murray would dare do anything.

(*Looking in the direction of the door.*)

HOWARD. He certainly takes chances that even I should pause to consider before taking.

(*Tilts back in his chair with careless grace.*)

GRANGER. If he stopped to consider, he wouldn't be the wonder he is. I never saw such a man. No matter what he does, it turns out well.

GEORGE. All the same, it's a dangerous experiment, and I don't like the idea of it. (*Rises to leave the room.*)

JAMES. You'll never get anywhere, Fowler, unless you have more courage.

HOWARD. Hold on a moment, George, I'm coming too. I wouldn't dare to be here when Murray gets back; he'd kick us all out.

(*They both leave the room, GEORGE calling back as he closes the door.*)

GEORGE. Remember, I said it was a risk he was taking.

GRANGER (*hurling a pillow after him*). Get out, you wet blanket! (*GRANGER pulls a chair up to the fire, motioning for JAMES to take another.*) I hope I haven't got Murray into a lot of trouble making that wager. I never really believed he'd call my bluff.

JAMES (*chuckling to himself*). I suppose there is some risk in what he has done, but Murray's luck will carry him through, and I dare say he is right. No girls would

dare to come here to Claverly to apply for the job. But, by Jove, it would be funny if they should!

(Laughs heartily.)

GRANGER. See here, James, if I'm going to lose that fifty dollars, I'm going to get my money's worth and teach Murray a good lesson at the same time. He's entirely too apt to trust to luck and it's bound to get him into trouble some day, and now that George has left us I don't mind saying so;—I tell you, I have an idea!

JAMES (*looking toward the door*). What is it?

GRANGER (*leaning over closer to JAMES*). You and I might masquerade as girls, we are both thin, and come here to this room on Tuesday to apply for the position of wife to his royal Highness. We can give him a scare even if he recognizes us in the end, and it would be fun to see how he takes the joke.

JAMES (*thoughtfully*). It's not a bad idea at all. What kind of a girl would you be?

GRANGER (*his eyes snapping at the thought*). A first class hummer, one to give him a set-back to meet in his study,—the kind of girl who might take the ad. seriously.

JAMES. And I suppose I must impersonate some one who will be a contrast to you.

GRANGER. Wouldn't any one know you'd draw the serious part!

JAMES. It's always serious business taking a girl's part, you know.

GRANGER. And it would be still more so to wake up and find oneself a girl. Wouldn't it be terrible?

(Shudders to think of it.)

JAMES. It certainly would be the worst nightmare—but when is it we are to appear before Murray?

GRANGER. Tuesday. (*A noise is heard.*) Hush! Here he comes; not a word. Do you really suppose he's mailed that letter?

JAMES. Of course he has.

(Door bursts open and MURRAY whirls into the room, greatly pleased with what he has done.)

MURRAY. Well, that's done. The die is cast; behold me an expectant bridegroom!

JAMES. And now all we have to do is to wait for the fireworks.

GRANGER. More likely the fire department to throw cold water on the beautiful applicants. (*Laughs loudly.*)

MURRAY (*a bit nettled*). I tell you there won't be any.

(GRANGER *takes out a small check-book and goes over to the table and makes out a check, handing it to MURRAY.*)

GRANGER. I'll admit, now it's all over, I never dreamed you'd take my bluff. Here's my share of the bargain.

MURRAY. You don't suppose I'd lose a chance to make an honest dollar, do you? But I refuse to take your money until you actually see my advertisement in the paper. If it never appears you can keep your fifty dollars.

GRANGER. And if it does you can have it. (*Starts to leave.*) Come along, Thornton, it's time Murray settled down to work. It's well for him to get used to doing a little, if he is so soon to be married.

(*Laughs, and MURRAY tries to join in.*)

JAMES. I'm more afraid he'll sit and dream of his future bride. (*The two men move toward the door.*) Say good-night to Charles for me. Too bad he was dining in town to-night; he missed lots of fun. That's the penalty of mixing with the fair sex; better enjoy your liberty while you have it, Murray, old chap.

MURRAY. How do you expect me to settle down to higher mathematics after an evening like this?

GRANGER (*as he opens the door to go out*). Better study how to be happy though married, instead!

(*They disappear out of the door as GRANGER says the last word, and MURRAY leans over his book trying to study.*)

CURTAIN

SCENE II

SCENE.—*Same room as last scene, four days later at four o'clock P. M.*

(As curtain rises MURRAY WINTHROP is seated at his desk trying not to appear nervous to his companion and room-mate, who keeps coming in and out from the room beyond. MURRAY really believes no one is likely to answer his advertisement, but still, on the chance that they may, he is tidying up the room as much as is consistent with men's ways, omitting several of the most important evidences of college life in a senior's room. The room-mate, CHARLES HOLLISTER, is busy too in a different way, much troubled by MURRAY'S sudden burst of neatness. Not having been on hand when the wager was made, he knows nothing of MURRAY'S anxiety, and cannot quite understand the latter's sudden interest in how the room looks.)

CHARLES. What in the world are you up to, Murray?

MURRAY. I can't bear to see this room so untidy.

CHARLES (*much surprised*). Well, when did you begin noticing it was messy? Little pains you have ever taken to make it anything else. (*Looking curiously at him.*) You aren't expecting company, are you?

MURRAY (*much afraid of being discovered*). Not really—but somehow the room looks worse than usual. What if your mother—or mine—should take it into their heads to come out to Cambridge, think how annoyed they'd be to find such a looking place as this.

(Goes on tidying up, throwing most of the débris under the divan.)

CHARLES (*more and more amazed*). You must be losing your mind, old chap; you are working too hard—come over and have a game of squash with me—it will do you good,—clear your brain of all this tidy nonsense.

MURRAY (*settling down to his books and beginning to*

study. CHARLES comes over and feels of his head). No, thanks, Hollister, I can't spare the time,—but don't let me keep you.

CHARLES. You couldn't. I can't live without exercise. No sane man can—you never used to be able to; you must be sick. Better consult a doctor.

MURRAY. For heaven's sake, go and get your exercise and don't worry about me. I've got to work.

(Bends over his book again.)

CHARLES *(looking sadly at MURRAY).* Well, I'll go find some one to play with me, then I'm going in town for dinner.

MURRAY *(with great impatience).* More fussing, I suppose— *(Looking up at CHARLES.)* See here, Charles, are you in love?

CHARLES. Of course I am, with every nice girl I meet,—nothing like it to keep a man out of mischief, you know. *(Going toward the door and stopping as he gets to it.)* When a fellow tells me he has no use for the fair sex, I always wonder what he's up to. Here's to every lovely woman!

(Kisses his hand and blows the kisses to the imaginary fair one, and disappears out of the door. MURRAY is about to begin work again when the door opens with a bang, and GEORGE FOWLER comes rushing in. MURRAY jumps nervously.)

FOWLER. Sorry to give you such a start, but I wanted some cigarettes and there isn't one to be found anywhere in our rooms. *(Going over toward the table.)* May I borrow some of yours, Murray?

MURRAY *(tipping his chair back and leaning over to the table and taking up a large cigarette box, hands it to FOWLER).* Help yourself,—take the whole box if you like.

FOWLER. Thanks awfully, but I only need a few.

MURRAY. Don't mention it, old fellow; come in whenever you want any more. *(FOWLER starts to sit down,*

much to MURRAY'S distress.) Don't let me keep you if you're in a hurry.

FOWLER. Oh, I'm in no hurry,—what's the matter anyway? I never saw any one so nervous.

MURRAY. I'm not nervous—but can't you see I'm working?

FOWLER. Come, Murray, why do you study this afternoon? What are you doing it for anyway? Going to be a Professor when you graduate next June?

MURRAY. Not a chance of it —

(Going back to his book again.)

FOWLER (*whistling*). Whew! My Lord, but you're stuffy! What's the matter? You aren't sick, are you?

MURRAY (*thoroughly discouraged as he looks at the clock, which has just struck half-past four*). Not exactly, only a bit nervous—over-trained, I suppose.

FOWLER (*suddenly remembering the day*). I might have guessed as much! It's Tuesday, the day of your at home. Excuse me. (*Starts to leave.*)

MURRAY. What a fool you are!

FOWLER. Perhaps I am, but not a patch on you, old man. Gosh! I wouldn't be in your shoes for twice what you're winning from Granger. (*Laughs heartily.*)

MURRAY. I'm quite willing to be in my own shoes. You miss lots of fun in this world, never taking any chances.

FOWLER. I dare say, but I also am spared some regrets.

MURRAY. Nothing venture, nothing have, you know. Want to bet me no one turns up this afternoon?

FOWLER. No, thanks, I'm not in the habit of betting on certainties; it's poor sport, you know.

(Trying not to laugh.)

MURRAY. Then I'm a poor sport, for my bet with Granger is a foregone conclusion. There'll be a crowd here this afternoon.

FOWLER. You might save some of the best of the bunch for the rest of us,—after you've taken your pick, of course. (*Opens the door.*)

MURRAY. Don't be an ass, Fowler.

FOWLER (*as he closes the door*). I'll go find some other donkey to play with. (*Bangs the door*.)

(*The janitor's telephone rings*. MURRAY runs nervously to answer it, taking down the receiver from a hook on the wall.)

MURRAY (*much agitated*). Hello, Atkins, what's that you say? A woman wants to see me? Who is it—you don't know—is she good-looking—what's that,—you don't like her style? Well, it's none of your business whether you do or not. She says she has an appointment with me—show her up—you don't think I'll want to see her,—that's for me to decide—I tell you, show her up. Tell her to come up to Room 16.

(MURRAY hangs up the receiver, goes to a mirror over the fireplace and arranges his tie, then goes back to the door and waits for a knock; then opens the door for a very dashing young woman. GRANGER is made up as a blonde. Her dress is very conspicuous in the latest fashion. She walks into the room as if quite at home there, smiling sweetly at MURRAY as she waits for him to ask her to sit down. MURRAY is much set up and ill at ease, looking down the hall outside the door to see if his visitor has been seen by any one passing.)

DAISY DUPONT. Is this Room 16?

MURRAY. It—is—won't you sit down? (*Showing her to a chair*.) Miss ——?

DAISY. Dupont. (*Taking the chair*.) Thanks. (*Taking an easy position as if settling herself for quite a stay. She undoes her furs, etc.*) I'm so glad to find you at home.

MURRAY (*much disturbed*). Yes—yes—what can I do for you,—Miss Dupont?

DAISY (*showing much surprise*). For me? What do you suppose? (*Leans forward intimately*.)

MURRAY. I can't—imagine. (*With some hesitation*.)

DAISY. You can't imagine! Well, I never heard anything so extraordinary. Didn't you put an advertisement in the paper last Saturday, asking for a wife?

MURRAY (*with feigned indifference*). Why—yes,—so I did.

DAISY. Well, I've come to apply for the position.

(*Looks pleased and begins to unbutton her gloves as if she were going to stay then and there;—then stops.*)

MURRAY (*growing more and more embarrassed*). You wish to marry me?

DAISY. I don't know whether I wish to exactly, but I must marry some one some time, and you might do as well as —

MURRAY (*gaining courage*). As any one else. Oh, I see, but the deuce take it —

DAISY (*pretending to be shocked*). Please don't swear, it hurts my sensitive ear. I can't bear violence of any kind; I'm a pacifist. (*Tries to appear demure.*)

MURRAY. Excuse me for saying so, but you don't look as if you would believe in non-resistance.

DAISY (*trying to be coy*). You can't always tell by appearances; things are seldom what they seem,—now, for instance, I'm not at all the kind of person you take me to be.

MURRAY (*much surprised*). Really?—What are you?

DAISY. That's for you to find out.

(*Making eyes at him.*)

MURRAY (*drawing up a chair and sitting on the arm of it, and watching first DAISY and then the door*). You'll have to admit there was some justice in my remark, and that your appearance is against you.

DAISY. Just as yours is against you.

MURRAY (*falling onto the chair*). My appearance is against me! How so?

DAISY. You don't look like a man who would have to advertise to get a woman to marry him.

MURRAY (*much annoyed*). But I didn't have to. It was only a joke.

DAISY. Isn't that just like a man to get his pleasure at the expense of some woman? They never think of the consequences of their fun—but what about me? You don't suppose I've run the chance of being criticized for coming here, do you, without expecting something in return? I intend to marry you. I do.

MURRAY (*shrinking with fright into his chair*). Well, I never expected—

DAISY. Neither did I before, but you needn't look at me like that, I won't bite you— (*Leaning forward closer to him.*) Come, ask me some questions; I'm not afraid to tell you all about myself. My life's an open book for you to read.

MURRAY. But you surely don't expect me to take you seriously, do you, Miss Dupont?

DAISY. Of course I do,—marriage is a very serious matter.

MURRAY. But you can't think I really intend to marry—just any woman who happens to turn up?

DAISY. Don't I fill all the requirements you mentioned in the advertisement? I'm not over twenty-one,—that is, not much (*Looking bashful.*), and not under eighteen by a long shot. I'm not so bad to look at, at least so others have said, and I've got a bully sense of humor or I wouldn't be here now, you can bet your sweet life on that; and as for common sense, everything else about me is common, so I suppose my sense is common too.

(*She throws her head back, laughing heartily at her own joke. MURRAY is amused in spite of his discomfort.*)

MURRAY (*getting up and standing before her*). Isn't this—all very sudden? (*Looking toward the door again.*)

DAISY. Of course it is. What else could it be? You didn't expect we'd be old friends, did you?

MURRAY. Not exactly, but I hoped—

DAISY. Some one a little more suited to your taste would appear. Hard luck, old chap; you see you took a

big chance when you advertised for a wife. You didn't suppose celebrated beauties, heiresses, and society belles were going to turn up, did you? You might have drawn some one worse than I am. (*Coming closer to him.*) Say, do you know, I believe you and I would hit it off finely — (*Takes a good look at him.*) I like to take chances too; I'm not afraid, and I'm willing to marry you—provided, of course, I like your family. I'm from Boston (*Proudly.*) and I think everything of family. I must marry into the right one, you know.

(*Leans back again in her chair with perfect assurance.*)

MURRAY. I'll be —

DAISY. Ashamed to have your family meet me?

MURRAY. I hope I'm not so rude as to say that.

DAISY. No, but you thought it. I don't mind, I rather like a man who is particular about whom he marries. I had a presentiment when I read your advertisement, that you might not care so much. I saw the moment I came into the room that you were a gentleman.

MURRAY. Thanks.

DAISY. Oh, don't mention it. And now that we are both satisfied, I think we might consider the matter settled.

(*Telephone rings again; MURRAY jumps nervously to answer it.*)

MURRAY. You say there is another woman downstairs to see me,—not like the other,—younger?

DAISY. Don't mind me.

MURRAY (*too excited to know what he was saying.*). No, I won't. (*To ATKINS.*) What's that you're saying? She's a lady? Well, ask her to come right up.

(*Turns from the telephone white as a sheet.*)

DAISY (*rising*). I can step into this room while you see the other lady. I'm in no hurry. Time is about all I have to spend these days.

MURRAY. Mighty kind of you to take it like this. (*Opens a door and hustles her into his room-mate's*

study.) I won't be long. (Just as he closes the door, mopping his brow with his handkerchief, a rap is heard, and MURRAY hastens to open the door, again looking to see if he has been seen. He sees a most lovely girl walk into his room, and is even more surprised than when DAISY appeared. Ushering her in.) What can I do for you, Miss —?

NANCY. Martin, that's my name. Are you the gentleman who advertised for a wife?

MURRAY (*almost falling over with surprise*). I am, but —

NANCY (*comes into the room, but does not offer to sit down, as DAISY did; is very modest and attractive*). Do you think I would—suit you?

(Dropping her eyes as he gazes at her.)

MURRAY. By Jove, I haven't a doubt of it! Won't you sit down?

NANCY (*taking the offered seat*). I mean, do you think we could come to some agreement? I wish to marry too. (*Smiling sweetly*.)

MURRAY (*his embarrassment quite gone, as he becomes interested in the beautiful girl before him*). I'm sure we could. (*Takes a chair and draws it close to hers*.)

NANCY (*with great dignity*). We might start by being friends.

MURRAY (*seriously*). And friendship might lead to something deeper.

NANCY (*frightened by his manner*). Not necessarily, by any means.

MURRAY. I am afraid you are sceptical of marriage.

(Looking at her with admiration.)

NANCY. That's why I never wanted to be married before.

MURRAY (*ardently*). I might have known you had some good reason for being single.

NANCY. Thanks, I have. (*Blushing*.)

MURRAY. Then why are you willing to undertake it now—in this careless manner?

NANCY. I rather like honesty myself, and if I married you, I should know you weren't trying to make me believe you cared for me.

MURRAY. But I would —

NANCY. Make me believe that.

MURRAY. Of course,—for I would lo —

NANCY (*stiffening*). I think we won't be personal; this is merely a matter of business. I wish to settle down, and to do that, I must marry.

MURRAY. May I ask how such a charming girl as you happened to answer an advertisement in the paper?

NANCY. If I, in turn, may ask you how such an agreeable man as you would be willing to advertise for a wife. Surely you could get a wife in a much easier way than that.

MURRAY. I'll tell you why I did it. (*Coming over and drawing a chair up close to NANCY.*) I enjoy games of chance; fate often settles a matter for a person when he hasn't the courage to decide it for himself. (*Leaning over.*) I almost hate to say so, but the fact is I have more money than I need, and I'm afraid some girl will marry me because of that. And to solve the difficulty I advertised for a wife, knowing if any one answered me, she would not be prejudiced in my favor because of the fortune I inherited from my uncle. (*NANCY looks amused, and DAISY peeks out of the door unseen by NANCY, whose back is toward the room where DAISY is hiding, waves to MURRAY, much to his discomfort, then disappears.* MURRAY goes on as if nothing had happened.) Now we don't happen to know a blooming thing about each other, so if you did—fall in love with me after a while, of course—so much the better, and if not before we were married, you might afterwards.

(*Looks up at NANCY, who is smiling indulgently at him.*)

NANCY (*trying not to show she doubts him*). And I have less money than I need, so I must marry somebody who has plenty of it. It doesn't seem fair, does it, to take advantage of a man when he could marry any one he chose? (*Looking sweetly at MURRAY.*)

MURRAY (*becoming more and more interested in NANCY*). I don't believe a thing you've said, Miss Martin.

NANCY. Any more than I am deceived by your statements.

MURRAY. Aren't you serious?

NANCY (*looking frightened by the turn things have taken, as MURRAY looks at her with more and more admiration*). Of course not, are you?

MURRAY. I meant it as a joke till I saw you; now I'm dead in earnest—really I am—it's a case of love at first sight,—Miss Martin. I'm just crazy about you, honest I am!

NANCY. Oh, please don't be, Mr.—

MURRAY. Winthrop, Murray Winthrop—call me Murray.

(*With much feeling, and trying to take her hand.*)

NANCY (*stiffly*). Mr. Winthrop—you can't wish me to believe you are taking this situation seriously, can you?

MURRAY. Well, rather! I was never more serious in my whole life.

(*DAISY peeps out again, but withdraws at once.*)

NANCY (*much frightened and looking about her*). Really, Mr. Winthrop, this has gone too far—let me go now; I only came here for a joke. (*Gets up to go.*)

MURRAY. But it ceases to be a joke to me,—I tell you, Miss Martin. I'm in love with you, more so than I ever expected to be with any one, and I want you to marry me—

NANCY (*starting to go*). Oh, please don't say any more—

(*She is standing by the telephone and it rings violently in her ear. She jumps, and so does MURRAY to answer it.*)

MURRAY (*holding the receiver to his ear and looking hopelessly at NANCY, who is edging toward the door*). Hello, Atkins,—what did you say,—Mrs. Winthrop is

down-stairs?—(To NANCY.) My mother, not my wife. (To ATKINS.) Good gracious! She's coming up-stairs now. (Drops the telephone.)

NANCY. What's to become of me? I must go before your mother comes.

MURRAY. You couldn't help meeting her outside,—come into my roommate's study. You can stay there till Mother leaves. She never stays long, she's too busy with meetings and things;—you know how it is with women.

(Moves toward HOLLISTER's room.)

NANCY (following him mechanically). I never did such a thing as *this* before.

(Going in the door and standing there looking at MURRAY helplessly.)

MURRAY. And you won't ever have to do it again. I hope neither of us will take any more chances; it won't be necessary.

(Looks knowingly at NANCY, closing the door after her, and starting toward the other.)

NANCY (opening her door a little way, and popping her head out). If I ever get out of this scrape, I'll never try any more experiments.

MURRAY. Neither will I, unless matrimony is one.

(NANCY slams the door and the one from the hall opens, and in walks MRS. WINTHROP, quite out of breath from her climb up the stairs. She is a typical Boston matron, kind, stout, trustful, a good old sort of the most conventional kind, amiable, but lacking in humor. She sinks into the first seat she finds, after kissing MURRAY affectionately.)

MRS. WINTHROP. My, that was a climb! I do wish they would have elevators in these dormitories. I find I can't go up-stairs as easily as I used to, but I don't suppose many old ladies come up here—or young ones either, for that matter. (Looks about the room.)

MURRAY. Not many except when we give teas, you know; but I never hear any complaints about the stairs when the girls come up.

MRS. W. Of course not. I dare say I took them too quickly—I'm almost dead.

(Rests a moment before saying anything more.)

MURRAY (*trying to be sympathetic in spite of his nervousness*). I'm sorry; next time you come to see me you must let me know, and I will come down and boost you up.

MRS. W. (*noticing how agitated MURRAY is*). You don't look very well yourself, Murray. (*Takes another careful look at him*.) Why, my boy, you look positively ill. What have you been doing?

MURRAY. Oh, nothing, just that little trouble with my heart—quite a good deal in fact. You have always said it ran in the family, but I never felt it until to-day.

(NANCY appears again as he says this, but she is behind MRS. WINTHROP, who does not see her, but of course MURRAY turns even paler.)

MRS. W. (*anxiously*). You must be careful, Murray; never strain it. Your father has had heart failure ever since I married him; each year it gives him more trouble.

(NANCY appears again, and listens to MURRAY'S next remark.)

MURRAY. I never realized mine was so weak until this afternoon. (*Looking at NANCY, who closes the door*.)

MRS. W. You must see the doctor about it. I'll telephone him to-night.

(She gets up and begins to walk about the room, examining various things.)

MURRAY. I will—if it continues to bother me. Where did you come from, Mother dear?

MRS. W. (*still looking about her*). I motored in from Brookline to attend an anti-suffrage meeting, and stopped

to have a word with you. I am sure you need something for your room. (*Takes up the table cover, which is burned in various places by cigarettes and cigars; holding it close to her eyes.*) This cover is very shabby. I don't see how moths could get into it at this time of year. Never mind, I will send you out another.

MURRAY. Don't bother; it will carry me through this winter. I don't want anything new. I wish to save up to be married. (*DAISY looks out.*)

MRS. W. To be married! What do you mean? I had no idea you were considering matrimony.

MURRAY. I didn't until very recently. I tell you I'm in love, but I'm not at liberty to tell you about it for the present.

(*DAISY disappears and NANCY comes out looking too worried for anything. MURRAY motions her to go back.*)

MRS. W. (*coming over and putting her arms about MURRAY*). My dear boy, I'm so interested; there is nothing like falling in love young—blessings on you, dear; but you say I can't know any more now? Well, never mind, I can wait. I know you are happy; that is all a mother wants for her son, to have him good and happy. (*Goes on with her examination of the room, walks up to the sideboard.*) I wish, Murray, you did not drink beer; spirits are so bad for your heart.

(*Puts the bottle down and goes toward the room where NANCY is.*)

MURRAY (*going over and stopping her*). I wouldn't go in there, Mother; a friend of mine is occupying it at present,—resting after a most trying examination.

MRS. W. (*moving away quickly*). Dear me, how fortunate you stopped me. I wouldn't disturb the poor boy for the world. How hard you all have to work! I only wanted to look over your clothes, your socks especially, they always need mending. You can give me some to take home when I leave. (*Goes over to the mantel, takes a picture from it, and examines it with her near-sighted*

eyes.) Who is this pretty creature? Why, it's your cousin Susie! But how thin she looks! I never should have known her. (*Goes over to MURRAY.*) Oh, you rogue! You never told me you were fond of Susie. How pleased your Aunt Hannah will be when she hears of it! (*Puts the picture back.*) How little we mothers know about our boys, after all, but we must trust them—yes, trust them always. Don't worry, I'm not urging you to tell me about your love affairs, I am quite willing to wait. I will be patient, but you have no idea how interested I am in your future; it is so easy to make mistakes, my boy, and hurry into marriage.

(*NANCY appears again, and later DAISY, never at the same time, however. MRS. WINTHROP walks back to the table and picks up a white disc, putting it into her mouth. She is too near-sighted to know it is not meant to eat. MURRAY comes to the rescue.*)

MURRAY. For mercy sake, don't bite that, Mother, it isn't meant to eat.

MRS. W. Isn't it? Dear me, how stupid I am! I'm as blind as a bat without my glasses. I left them in the motor—funny, I thought I was eating a Necco wafer. What was it?

MURRAY (*removing the box of chips*). Something we fellows play with.

MRS. W. Oh, yes, tiddledewinks, I suppose, but it seemed large for that. I always thought it a foolish game. I'm surprised men of your age should care for it. It seems childish, doesn't it? But then all men are children after all. Their games are limited—

MURRAY. Yes, this one is, especially limited.

MRS. W. I always was dull at games, that's why I never tried to learn Bridge. (*Goes up to the picture again.*) This really does not look so much like Susie, after all. Did you say it was Susie?

MURRAY (*growing desperate*). No, I did not. It was you who insisted it was Susie.

MRS. W. (*replacing it on the mantel again*). It does look like Susie. Is it a friend of yours?

MURRAY. I don't even know the young lady; she is a friend of my room-mate's.

(MRS. WINTHROP *looks pleased.*)

MRS. W. Well, my dear, I must run along. I want to see your Aunt Hannah and Cousin Mary now I'm in Cambridge, but I'll be back in half an hour to make you a cup of tea. (*Looking at the sideboard.*) I don't suppose you have any cake. (*Suddenly has an idea.*) I think I will go out and get some; there is a bake shop over in the Square. I'll not be long. (*Starts for the door but stops.*) You don't mind if I come back and make you a cup of tea, do you, dear?

MURRAY. Aren't you afraid of coming up the stairs again?

MRS. W. I'll take them slowly next time. (*Goes out and MURRAY follows.*) Don't come with me, Murray. I know you are busy working.

MURRAY (*following her out*). I insist on coming.

(*Goes after her and as he closes the door, DAISY and NANCY come out of their rooms, walking into each other.*)

NANCY. Who are you?

DAISY. Where did you come from?

NANCY. I'd rather not say.

DAISY. So would I.

NANCY. What are you doing here?

DAISY. The same thing you are.

NANCY. Did you answer Mr. Winthrop's advertisement?

DAISY. Of course; didn't you?

NANCY. Do you expect to marry him?

DAISY. Not after seeing that he cares for you.

NANCY. But I'm not in the least serious.

DAISY. Then what in the world did you come here for?

NANCY. I can't explain just now.

DAISY. Will you explain it when Mr. Winthrop comes back?

NANCY. I may.

(Sound is heard and both girls rush back into their rooms. MURRAY comes back wiping his brow; bell rings and he takes up the telephone again.)

MURRAY. The dickens, you say, another woman—well, show her up.

(Makes a cigarette up and lights it, sinking into a chair looking toward the other doors. A tap on the door and MURRAY goes to open it, and nearly falls over when he sees what it is. It is JAMES dressed as the most exaggerated female prig. She comes quickly into the room.)

PRIG. Is this the gentleman who advertised for a helpmate? (Sentimentally.)

MURRAY (in despair). I have the honor of being that indiscreet person.

PRIG. Couldn't you get a wife in any other way? I sympathize with you, for I have often thought I might have to resort to the same extreme myself to get a husband.

MURRAY (with annoyance, for the first time losing his patience). I never thought of doing it at all, it was —

PRIG. Such a romantic way to get a wife.

(Looks lovingly at him, driving him crazy.)

MURRAY. It might be? (Looking toward the door where NANCY is looking at him unseen by the PRIG who is gazing at MURRAY with rapt expression.) But I begin to doubt it.

PRIG. Don't, dear. (MURRAY starts.) Don't you see how it has brought us together?

MURRAY. But when there are too many to choose from, it ceases to be romantic.

PRIG (with feigned surprise). Have there been others?

MURRAY. Several.

PRIG (sadly). Then I'm not the only one.

MURRAY. By no means.

PRIG (looking up sentimentally into his eyes). And

you turned them all down for me. How fortunate for me!

MURRAY. But I can't decide until I see them all.

PRIG. Do consider me! I'm sure we are affinities, in fact made for each other. I like romance too,—love and —— (*Sound from other room.*) What was that noise? Are we not alone?

MURRAY. Do you see any one?

PRIG (*looking about*). No, but I hear voices.

MURRAY. That's not surprising; I have a friend in that room who is peculiar,—he's not in his right mind at present. He thinks he's different people, any one but what he really is.

PRIG. Poor man!

MURRAY. Yes, it's very sad.

PRIG. I should think you'd be afraid to have him room with you.

MURRAY. He doesn't; we have separate bedrooms and studies too.

PRIG. Which is his room?

MURRAY (*pointing to where DAISY is*). That one. (*DAISY has just popped her head out and disappears again. Bell rings.*) I think that is my mother.

PRIG (*assuming fright*). Your mother? What shall I do? I can't be seen here.

MURRAY. Of course you can't; come in here and wait till she goes home.

PRIG. In the room where your crazy roommate is? Not on your life! I'd rather meet your mother; at least she is a woman.

MURRAY. Come in here,—this is not where he is; you will be quite safe, and for goodness sake don't come out. Lock yourself in, if you like.

(PRIG is disposed of and CAROLINE WINTHROP, MURRAY'S sister, comes in. MURRAY is about discouraged as another female appears.)

CAROLINE (*looking around the door*). Hello, Murray, are you alone? Queer, but I thought I heard voices as I came to the door, girls' voices, too.

MURRAY (*much embarrassed*). I'm rehearsing a part for the spring play—awfully funny part it is too, ha, ha!

(*Laughing nervously.*)

CAROLINE (*much interested*). How thrilling! And you are taking the girl's part; how fascinating! And you have to try to change your voice as much as you can, don't you? That accounts for the fact the voice really didn't sound like a girl's after all.

MURRAY. Yes, (*Simpering.*) yes, one does have to do strange things with the voice when acting in theatricals.

CAROLINE. I know something about it; let me help you with your part. I adore acting. (*Looking about the room.*) Is Charles in his room?

MURRAY. No, not just now, he's gone out for a while. (*Stands with his back against the door.*) But he'll be back presently.

CAROLINE (*looking disappointed*). I hope he'll come before I go.

MURRAY. Yes—I—hope—he will.

(*He doesn't look it.*)

CAROLINE. I tell you, Murray, you go and get him and I'll be making tea,—get some of the other boys too. I'm sure they'd adore to have tea; you might buy some muffins outside, if you have time. (*MURRAY carefully locks the doors while talking, but CAROLINE does not see, as she is so busy arranging the tea table. As MURRAY starts off.*) Mind you get Charles. (*He goes out and CAROLINE works away when suddenly the girls try to get out.*) Goodness! what's that?

DAISY. Let me out. Some one has locked this door. (*CAROLINE goes over to unlock the door. Letting DAISY out. It is of course GRANGER, who recognizes CAROLINE, and likes her very much. DAISY forgets who he is supposed to be.*) Oh, Miss Winthrop!

CAROLINE (*taken back to see that such a person knows her*). Do you know me?

DAISY. Well, rather. (*Then growing cautious.*)

That is, your face is familiar. Murray has shown me your picture very often.

CAROLINE (*stiffening*). My picture! I should like to know how you happened to know my brother. What are you doing in his room?

DAISY. That isn't his room, it is Charles Hollister's room.

CAROLINE (*even more annoyed*). And is Mr. Hollister a friend of yours too?

DAISY. He and I have been pals for years.

CAROLINE (*angry*). Pals indeed! (*Hears another knock.*) What's that?

DAISY. It sounds to me as if some one was trying to get out of that room.

CAROLINE (*goes over to another door*). Who's in there?

NANCY (*in sweetest tones*). It's I; please let me out.

(NANCY walks out and she and CAROLINE recognize each other as classmates at Radcliffe.)

CAROLINE (*with genuine surprise*). What in the world are you doing in my brother's room?

NANCY. I'm not surprised you should wonder at it.

DAISY. I don't blame you for thinking it queer for us all to be here.

CAROLINE. Nancy, will you please explain yourself?

NANCY. I can't. (*Hangs her head with shame.*)

CAROLINE (*losing patience*). But you must.

PRIG (*calling out*). Are there any men out there?

ALL. Only women!

PRIG. Then I'll venture out.

(*Peers around the corner of the room.*)

CAROLINE. It grows more and more peculiar.

NANCY. It certainly is.

PRIG (*to CAROLINE*). And pray, who are you, my dear?

(*Looking at her through her lorgnette.*)

CAROLINE. I, the only one of you who has the right to be here at all. I'm Mr. Winthrop's sister.

PRIG (*coming forward and taking CAROLINE'S hand with his gloved one*). How delightful to meet some of his family!

CAROLINE. And pray, who are you?

PRIG. His future wife. At least I hope to be.

(*Door bursts open, and CHARLES HOLLISTER comes in, quite unconscious of all that has happened. He looks with surprise at the girls and then walks up to CAROLINE.*)

CHARLES. Why, Caroline, where did you come from?

CAROLINE. Please explain how this woman happened to be sitting in there. She came out of your room just now.

PRIG. He's crazy, he's crazy! He's the man Mr. Winthrop warned me was out of his head. He's a lunatic.

CHARLES. Murray says I'm crazy! You are very much mistaken; I am not in the least out of my head.

PRIG. Oh, yes, you are, you talk to yourself. I heard you in that very room a little while ago. (*Points to it.*)

CAROLINE. Can and will some one kindly explain what all this means. How do you all happen to be in my brother's room, especially you?

(*Points to DAISY, who claims to be a pal of MR. HOLLISTER'S.*)

CHARLES. Blest if I know what it means. I left this room not half an hour ago without a soul in it, and come back to find a regular town meeting.

CAROLINE. Unless it is explained, (*To CHARLES, and she is about ready to cry.*) you may consider our engagement broken.

DAISY. Mr. Winthrop will explain when he comes back.

CAROLINE. Please do not interfere; I asked Mr. Hollister to speak.

CHARLES. But I don't know any more about it than you do.

CAROLINE. I came here to have tea with my brother, and I find the place filled with women, one in each room locked in, two on the outside, and one on the in.

CHARLES. Locked in?

CAROLINE. Yes indeed.

NANCY (*quietly*). It can all be explained to your satisfaction, when Mr. Winthrop comes back. Please be patient; it is quite as trying for us all as for you.

(*The door opens and MURRAY comes in. Exclamations from all; NANCY looks embarrassed.*)

PRIG. Please have the kindness to remove your crazy room-mate.

CHARLES. If I stay here I shall lose my reason.

CAROLINE. Murray, won't you please explain the meaning of all these people being here? You needn't explain that one, (*Pointing to NANCY.*) for she is a friend of mine.

MURRAY (*delighted*). You know her?

CAROLINE. We go to Radcliffe together.

MURRAY. Thank goodness! Then introduce me to her.

CAROLINE. Murray, for heaven's sake tell me what it is all about.

DAISY. I think I can do that better than he can. (*Every one looks surprised as GRANGER comes forward.*) I made a bet with your brother the other night that he would not dare advertise for a wife. He took me up, and behold the result!

CAROLINE. Murray, how did you dare?

MURRAY. I had the courage of ignorance.

GRANGER (*resuming his natural voice and removing his wig*). And I answered it!

JAMES (*removing his wig*). And so did I.

(*Everybody is surprised, and then all eyes are focused on NANCY, who is more and more overcome with embarrassment.*)

CAROLINE (*coming over and standing beside NANCY*). And did you answer the advertisement too? I can't believe it; you must have some other reason for being here.

NANCY. Now I can tell the truth, for I too have won my wager, but after a cruel experience. I think I have learned my lesson never to be rash again. The other evening after reading Mr. Winthrop's advertisement in the "Transcript," one of my friends dared me to answer it, in fact she offered me one hundred dollars to come here as I have to-day, and say what I did a while ago. I needed the money terribly to take me through the rest of the year at college, and as I have no fear of men, or thought I hadn't, until this afternoon, I ventured to take her at her word. I am a stranger in Boston, and believed no one would know me, and at Claverly Hall where the nicest kind of students live, I had no idea I should be placed in such an awkward position. It never occurred to me I would get such a fright, and I apologize to you all for what I did. It was a dangerous experiment, and I have suffered for my folly.

CAROLINE. Please don't take it so much to heart, for it was only a joke after all.

CHARLES. But how in the world did you women all get in here anyway? Girls aren't allowed in Claverly Hall.

GRANGER. Unless a man is giving a tea. We told Atkins Winthrop was having one, and you see even his sister came to it, so we are all properly chaperoned.

NANCY. With your permission I shall go, and I ask your pardon, Mr. Winthrop, for doing what I have.

(*Starts to go, but MURRAY stops her.*)

MURRAY. But we can't allow you to go without tea, and then when you have finished drinking it, with your consent I will take you to your boarding place. You and I have played a very risky game, but I, for one, do not regret it. I know I shan't if it has won me a — (Door opens and MRS. WINTHROP comes in, out of breath as usual, her arms full of bundles. She stands aghast before

the crowd. MURRAY steps forward and takes her hand.) Come right in, Mother; don't be surprised; you are just in time to see the fun. Some of us have been rehearsing for a play; it is much like—the Comedy of Errors, in which I am taking a prominent part. (Turning to NANCY.) Let me introduce you to my leading lady, Miss —

NANCY (*blushing but entering into the spirit of the occasion*). Nancy Webster.

MURRAY. Miss Nancy Webster—my future wife. (To NANCY, *smiling*.) Miss Webster, (Taking her hand.) this is your mother-in-law.

(MRS. WINTHROP *drops her bundles and opens her arms to NANCY who falls into them*.)

CURTAIN

SEASON 1922

A BUNCH OF FUN

A Farce in Three Acts.

By *Erastus Osgood*

Five males, nine females. A simple interior scene throughout. Modern costumes. The plot of this farce crackles with fun as though charged with laughter and smiles. Vera, the baseball girl, makes a "hit" in more ways than one. Sylvia, the dancing girl, steps right into the hilarity with a whirl. Nina, the stage aspirant, gives a new twist to Shakespeare, and Cecily, the Mandolin girl, would lure a smile from a Sphinx. These four girls are the "Bunch." Tacks, the football star, tackles love from a new angle. Ray was a born Romeo, but misfires. Lynn plays the clown to every one's delight, and if Murray hadn't written the sketch, lots of things would not have happened. Mrs. Selma Blair tries to break up the fun, but "nothing doing." Miss Martha is a delightful character. Alice entertains the "bunch" and is well repaid. Dr. and Mrs. Grandon form a charming background for an evening of wholesome amusement. And last, the arch fun-maker, Christina, the Swedish maid. If she knew how funny she was, she wouldn't believe it. She is "stuck on the movies" but Ray declared, "that for pulling funny stunts, Christina has got Charlie Chaplin beaten forty different ways." Free for amateur performance.

Price, 35 cents

CHARACTERS

REV. STEPHEN GRANDON, D. D., *rector of St. Paul's.*

MARY, *his wife, "flustered on occasions."*

MARTHA, *his sister, "a trifle warped."*

CHRISTINA, *a Swedish maid, "stuck on the movies."*

RAYMOND HUNTING, *a live wire.*

VERA MATHERSON, *a baseball fan.*

NINA LEE, *a stage aspirant.*

CECILY MOORLAND, *the mandolin girl.*

SYLVIA STEWART, *the dancing girl.*

LYNN LOCKWOOD, *the man "who takes off his face."*

ALICE HUNTING, *the entertaining girl.*

MURRAY KENT, *a college playwright.*

TACKS MULFORD, *a football star.*

MRS. SELMA BLAIR, *a pest in the parish.*

SCENE

Heatherdale near New York. (The entire action takes place in the living-room at the rectory.)

TIME: Present.

Act I.—"The Bunch" arrives.

Act II.—"The Bunch" in action.

Act III.—"The Bunch" choose partners.

GOOD-EVENING, CLARICE

A Farce Comedy in Three Acts.

By J. C. McMullen

Five males, six females. Playing time, approximately two hours. Costumes of the present day. Scene—a single interior. Annette Franklin, a jealous wife, has been raising a little domestic war over her husband's supposed infatuation for a noted dancer, Clarice de Mauree. How Annette was proven wrong in her supposition, cured of her jealousy, and found her long lost parents, makes a comedy, which, while easy of production, proves very effective in the presentation. The part of Clarice, the dancer, gives the opportunity for an excellent female character lead. All of the other parts are of equal importance and the situations fairly radiate comedy and swift moving action. This new play has already made its public débüt in manuscript form, having been used with great success on the Pacific coast. Royalty, \$10.00 for the first and \$5.00 for each subsequent performance by the same cast. Professional rates will be quoted on request.

SCENES

Act I.—Living-room of the Franklin residence, Buffalo, N. Y.,
7:15 P. M.

Act II.—The same, 8:15 P. M.

Act III.—The same, 9:00 P. M.

Price, 50 cents.

HIS UNCLE'S NIECE

A Rollicking Farce in Three Acts.

By Raymond W. Sargent

Six males, three females. Scenery not difficult. The plot of this hilarious farce centres around a letter received by Francis Felton from his Uncle Simon of Happy Valley Junction, who has always supposed that Francis was of the opposite sex. The letter announces that the uncle has selected a husband for his niece and that they are both on the way to New York to make final arrangements for the wedding. In desperation, to keep up a deception started years before by his parents, Francis assumes a female character rôle in order to carry out a provision whereby he is to receive a million dollar bequest from his uncle. The explanations made necessary through this change are amusing and realistic. The dénouement is a surprise and one that will lift the audience to its feet with applause. You have seen Charley's Aunt on the professional stage, and here is a chance for amateurs to act in a play that is even better suited to their requirements.

CHARACTERS

SCENES

Act I.—Interior of Francis Felton's and Richard Tate's bachelor establishment at Boston.

Act II.—Same as Act I. Afternoon of the same day.

Act III.—Exterior of Uncle Simon's summer home at Happy Valley Junction. Evening; three days later.

TIME: Midsummer.

Time of playing: Approximately two hours.

Price, 35 cents.

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